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'Killer Camera' Sale to Qaddafi Laid to Wilson

In the 1940 film classic, "Foreign Correspondent," an assassin posing as a news photographer trains his camera on a world statesman, trips the flash and simultaneously fires a fatal bullet.

That fictional scene could happen at any moment in real life, with only one small change in the script: the bullet would be fired right through the camera lens.

There could be more than 300 of these "assassination" cameras currently in the hands of terrorists around the world—courtesy of Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi and his former supplier, ex-CIA agent Edwin P. Wilson. Each of the diabolical devices is capable of firing two .22 bullets through the lens with deadly accuracy.

The story was provided to my associate Dale Van Atta by a former Wilson employee. It has been corroborated by other sources, documents, and transcripts of secret testimony before the House Intelligence Committee.

Through his attorney, Wilson denied any role in the manufacture of the murderous cameras. But the for-

mer associate emphatically asserted: (1) that Wilson had requested that a prototype be developed for Qaddafi; and (2) that Wilson was "the one who tried it out."

The details:

In April, 1978, Wilson gave the associate a list of assassination devices he wanted to procure for Libya. At the top of the list were the camera guns, to be equipped with silencers, if possible. "I want a lot of them and I want them accurate," Wilson told the associate. "You take care of the details and tell me how much it costs." After a successful prototype was developed, the former associate said, Wilson planned to set up a shop on his Virginia farm to make them.

The associate and a companion flew to Tampa and arranged for an acquaintance to build the prototype. According to a Wilson company voucher and National Airlines ticket records, the flight was made on April 23, 1978.

Leaving his companion behind to assist the inventor, the associate returned to Washington. In less than a month, the inventor and the assistant arrived in the capital by rented car, bringing with them a working camera-gun. The associate picked the pair up at the rental-car office and paid the bill with Wilson company money. The next day, the inventor and the associate drove to a secluded site in Virginia to test the device. Firing at a can floating in a

stream, they found the camera-gun to be accurate.

When they delivered the weapon to Wilson at his estate in Upperville, Va., he couldn't wait to test it. He instructed the associate, the inventor and another aide to climb into his Cadillac, and the four careened across rocks and ruts to a remote corner of the farm. "I thought he was crazy," said the associate.

The camera gun "worked like a charm," the associate said, and Wilson "thought it was great." But Wilson didn't want to risk carrying it to Qaddafi on his person, so he inveigled the inventor into toting it. A telex copy of the ticket purchase shows that the two took the same flight to Libya on May 21, 1978.

Wilson quickly wired the associate that the camera-gun was a big hit, and ordered him to scour local shops in search of older cameras. The older models were sturdier than newer ones and wouldn't blow up in an assassin's face.

Eventually, between 250 and 300 cameras were sent to Tripoli to be converted into weapons.

Footnote: The inventor of the deadly device never got paid. Wilson deposited his money—more than \$200,000—in a Swiss bank account to which the inventor has no access. During Wilson's recent trial in Alexandria, Va., on weapons-smuggling charges, the inventor joined the crowd of spectators, hoping to get a word with his debtor, to no avail.